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# COMMON SENSE II

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*Capitalizing on the familiarity and influence of Thomas Paine’s “Common Sense” pamphlets that provided American colonists with exposure to the conversation of great thinkers in the pre-Revolutionary period, this paper assumes the name COMMON SENSE II. Similarly, today’s series of pamphlets strives to give a direct response to great political events and ideas of our time.*

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Protest Issue

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## Saving Our Democratic Republic

By Eric Grimsrud

What can we do during these extremely difficult times which include not only the unchecked advance of global warming, but now also the more immediate global problem posed by the Covid-19 virus? In the last few years, we have also witnessed a break down in our executive and legislative branches of the federal government and a weakening of our traditional institutions of governance, including our federal agencies responsible for the preservation of public health and our natural environment. We have also seen a deterioration of our relationships with the other democracies

of the world while ignoring the threats posed by the world’s authoritarians who seek to under-

mine the democracies. An increased use of our military for political purposes is also troubling. Perhaps most disappointing of all is the fact that all of these setbacks have been facilitated—as well as initiated—by our distinctly autocratic President and his enablers in the GOP. As a result of these recent events, we now appear to be in danger of losing our democratic means of self-governance as well as our efforts to address our environmental and public health problems. Do we not remember what happened during the Depression years of the 1930s in Germany when it gradually handed off its reins of government to a dictator and the Nazi party?



The simultaneous rise of the above set of issues now requires that we think more broadly about the solutions required—including those for preserving our democratic republic. Because it is most unlikely that such thinking can occur with the mix of politicians presently in our executive and legislative branches, an appropriate first step in addressing our problems is to ensure that Trump and his enablers are removed from their high offices as soon as possible—hopefully in November.



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<https://sites.google.com/site/itascacountydfi/home/voteblue-shirt>



# In Memory of George Floyd:

## Gone Too Soon

By Nancy Rudd

### Part I: George Perry Floyd, Jr.

His family called him Perry. The people who knew him best just called him Floyd. What George Floyd's family wants us to remember



about him is that he moved to Minneapolis, Minnesota, from Houston. He

wanted to make himself a better father, and he wanted

a fresh start. He wanted a new job, so he learned to drive a truck. He also worked at a restaurant as a security guard, but that came to an end with the close of the restaurants due to the pandemic. He contracted COVID-19 and recovered.

George Perry Floyd, Jr. was born in Fayetteville, North Carolina, and he and his mother moved to Houston, Texas. He grew up in Houston's Third Ward and played football and basketball in Jack Yates High School. He played basketball for three years at South Florida State College. His coach, George Walker, said that he was a pretty good athlete and didn't give him any trouble.

After he left college, Floyd hung around with a bad crowd. Thirteen years ago he ended up with a five year prison sentence for aggravated robbery with a deadly weapon. After getting out of prison, he became involved in his local ministry, Resurrection Houston. He was determined to improve himself and his neighborhood. Several years ago, he moved to Minneapolis, Minnesota.

His brother Philonise said, "Knowing my brother is to love my brother. He's a gentle giant; he don't hurt anybody." Floyd was 6'6" tall. Rosa Hudson, who dated Floyd around 20 years ago said that he was a good father and a loving person.

NBA player Stephen Jackson, who called himself George Floyd's twin, said that Floyd didn't have a hateful bone in his body. Jackson said that the difference between Floyd and him was that he had had more opportunity. They both talked about being better fathers. Floyd had five children, the youngest daughter Gianna is six; his oldest daughter has a daughter of her own.

He was murdered on Memorial Day, May 25, 2020, by four police officers. He was only 46

years old. In Minneapolis, his six-year old daughter sat on the shoulders of Stephen Jackson and said, "My daddy has changed the world!" Let's make sure that he has.

### Part II: A Prelude and the Murder

I've always said that if I could wave my hand and take away one thing in the world, it would be prejudice, but life isn't a fantasy and I can't do that. My dad told me that it was up to us white people to try to make things right with black people. It's not good enough to just not be a racist; you have to be anti-racist.

A high school friend and I always said the Grand Rapids was too "lily-white" for us, and we'd love to see a more interracial city. She has lived all over the states of Minnesota and Virginia, finally settling in Maple Grove, Minnesota. I stayed in Grand Rapids but have had multi-racial experiences beyond my interracial grandchildren. Although my personal experience has been more limited than my friend's, I have had enough to recognize the value in others regardless of their color, ethnicity, or religion and to know that how George Floyd and so many others were treated is reprehensible.

Unions exist to advocate for their members within the bounds of the profession's code of ethics and to give their members a seat at the table. Legitimate advocating should include upholding the code of ethics of the profession as well as assuring due process for accused members. It does not mean insisting rogue members literally get away with murder. The MPD union among other police unions has a long history of protecting rogue members and in general being out of control.



Instead of standing for fair and equal law enforcement,

Trump has fomented racism and anti-press sentiments so that protesters and the press were not only mistreated by the police but injured. His policies and comments encourage the hatred, cruelty, and mistreatment that have led to protests becoming riots. Trump violated the peaceful



<https://pinstripesumps.files.wordpress.com/2012/08/first-amendment.jpg>

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protesters' First Amendment rights of assembly and speech by assaulting them with pepper canisters and rubber bullets. By persisting in calling the press an enemy of the people, he shows he doesn't believe in the free press part of the First Amendment either. Calling in the military to use against U.S. citizens was beyond comprehension for former generals who finally spoke up. Like me most of the public was appalled. Most of the Republicans in Congress were appallingly silent.

The scariest part of this for me was the National Guard stationed next to each other on the steps leading up to the Lincoln Memorial. Another scary part is former CIA analyst Gail Helt's assessment, "This is what autocrats do. This is what happens to countries before a collapse. It really does unnerve me." The United States is supposed to be the Great American experiment. It's sad to know that experiments can fail.

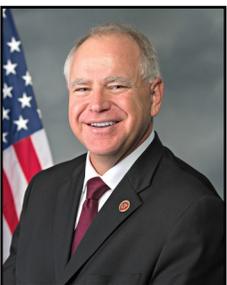
### Part III: Policing in the United States

Law enforcement departments exist to do just that: enforce the law. Ideally the laws are enforced equally and all are treated fairly. As we have very graphically seen, that is not always the case.

Today there is a culture of fear of those who are different from "us." This has engendered a movement of white supremacy that has made domestic hate crimes from these homegrown terrorist groups more prevalent than foreign terrorism.

Besides white supremacy, police departments have become more militarized both in equipment and in training. Theoretically, the military equipment is to prevent the police from being outgunned by the bad guys. After 9/11 local law enforcement agencies were provided surplus military equipment including armored vehicles and grenade launchers. With the equipment came the military "warrior" training. The mindset instilled changed from "protect and serve" to "kill or be killed."

In response to the recent protests, Minnesota Governor Walz and Democrats have listed eight changes they want made in Minnesota's police system. The problem will be working with a Republican Senate. If anything does get through the legislature, it needs to have consequences to be effective. The same is true on the national level. If Chauvin goes to prison for a long time, that would be one consequence.



## Catalyst

By Bob Passi

One definition of a catalyst is an agent that provokes or speeds significant change; another is a person or thing that precipitates an event. The death of George Floyd happens to be a potential catalyst for a long overdue reaffirmation of our most basic American values. Those values are respect



<https://cdn.80000hours.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Domino-effect.jpg>

for others and a concern for equality and justice. They are the basic tenets of a humanized democratic society.

The human spirit remains alive and well within all people, regardless of status and regardless of abuse, oppression, repression, or exploitation as was evident in the Holocaust survivors. It remains alive in the world and is at the very heart of the American spirit; that spirit that has long held onto the ideals that all men (people) are created equal, and the ideal of government of the people, by the people, and for the people.



This human spirit is the reason that America was a beacon for freedom for ordinary people around the world during much of our history. We were not perfect in our execution of those ideals, but there were many periods where we continued to make progress toward their fulfillment.

In recent history we have turned away from those ideals in our apparent search for economic solutions to all human problems. But that human spirit continues to exist, waiting for an opportunity to emerge. Religions have spoken about it. Articles, books, movies, TV programs, and music have been written about it. We have all wrung our hands and shaken our heads when abuses have occurred that led to traumatic results like police brutality and gun violence. And yet nothing seemed to change. That norm of indifference to human suffering almost seemed unassailable, protected by an entrenched system of dominance—a system based on money and manipulation.

But just as we nearly begin to despair, an event occurs which catches the attention of that human spirit and brings it to light. That human spirit that has had to exist in a spiritually arid environment was waiting for the spark to burst into flame and create the light necessary to bring clarity to the failing of

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an existing system.

Even when a social environment looks stable and static, a catalyst causes significant—and perhaps unexpected—changes that transform the very nature of that environment.

There were many events that helped prepare the ground for this change of consciousness. There have been many attempts over the last couple of centuries by ordinary people around the world to demand a more significant role in governing their own future. These attempts have most often been thwarted by those with power and money. But the human spirit remained alive and quietly grew. The more recent growth of authoritarian governance around the world has caused that spirit to become stronger, looking for some way to survive and express itself.

The clear need to change in the face of warnings of global environmental disasters fed that smoldering fire. The 2016 election of Donald Trump and his term as President made clear what was to come if we only focused on the authoritarian dictates of a market economy. And the heat grew.



<https://www.picpedia.org/highway-signs/images/pandemic.jpg>

This recent pandemic prepared the ground for transformation by making us face the failures of a system that put profits before people or the planet, sacrificing the security and the health of hundreds of thousands of people while trying

to resurrect a global economic system that is no longer functional in a modern world, especially in the face of this new human reality.

Then there was the graphic death of George Floyd at the hands of a repressive system bent on control at all costs.

It was the last straw, the straw that broke the camel's back, the event that created the final realization that enough is enough. The human spirit could no longer tolerate any more abuse. The human spirit broke out with cleansing flames, providing enough light to finally see clearly through the fog created by an economic system that defines all relationships in economic terms. The human spirit in all of us knows that humanity cannot survive in such a society.



<http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-a1nkaZC2B0o/TyLxzyz6kqI/AAAAAAAAA8k/jAMyBQK7Bc/s1600/sun-at-work.jpg>

Breaking through that fog, we can see each other as valuable human beings, far beyond anything economics has to say. The caring, compassionate heart comes to life again, finally freed from its economic bondage. That spirit, now back in full view and ready to lead, will require a transformation, a rethinking of how to live together on this planet to create a sustainable future.

George Floyd was in many ways an ordinary man living an ordinary life in America, running the risks that people of color continually run in our society. His death could have become another statistic: just another unarmed black man killed in police custody. But because of the accumulation of events, injustices, and attacks on the human spirit, his death became the final event, the breaking point, the catalyst that caused a flood of energy from the previously pent-up human spirit which will carry with it a new vision, a reinvented human society reflective of the best of the human spirit, to a transformed America, a transformed world, and a transformed planet.

## **CALENDAR OF EVENTS: GET INVOLVED AND GET IT DONE!**

<b><u>Event</u></b>	<b><u>Date /Time</u></b>	<b><u>Location</u></b>
DFL Headquarters Open (326-6296)	Tuesdays 2:00-5:00	DFL Headquarters
Itasca Progressive Caucus (259-4490)	Suspended	DFL Headquarters
DFL Central Committee Meets	4th Monday	DFL Headquarters
DFL Social Club & Lunch	Suspended	DFL Headquarters
DFL Pot Luck (Open to the Public)	Suspended	DFL Headquarters
Working Families Alliance	Suspended	Dutchroom
Earth Circle	Suspended	GR Public Library
Circles of Support	Suspended	811 NE 4th St. GR
Haven: A Place for All	Suspended	Kiesler Center
Deadline for <i>Common Sense II</i>	July 13, 2020	conray@arvig.net

# Reform, Defund, or Dismantle Police?

By Vicki Andrews

The future of law enforcement is uncertain; after



<https://0.wp.com/fabiusmaximus.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/police-reform.jpg?ssl=1>

too many incidents that appear to be based on racially charged conflicts between police and people of color, many around the country are calling for change.

My interactions with the police have always been comfortable even when I was being arrested for various protests, but I realize that is due to “white privilege.” The people in our groups of protestors were primarily white, middle class, and well-educated. I realized how different it would be for a person of color to be out on the street in Washington, D.C. deliberately risking arrest to stand up for an issue. Waiting in holding cells with larger groups of people—many people of color—and listening to their stories of why they were there and their fears of what would happen to them certainly raised my awareness.



People, especially people of color living in poverty, are hurting from police bias and mistreatment. For years they have felt powerless; it must feel as though anytime they stand up for themselves they get knocked down again. We have seen many incidents in recent years of people being injured and/or murdered by police officers, and nothing seems to change.

Now is the time to take a serious look at the situation and what can be done. It may make sense to abolish the current police system, but what would replace it? That will take serious study, experimentation, deep community discussions. What is the role of the police currently? What should it be? We have given the police too many diverse assignments with not enough training or partnerships with others. In addition to catching “bad guys” we expect them to be there to deal with people experiencing mental health problems as well as stray dogs, rebellious adolescents, domestic violence, homelessness, and many other situations. Call 911; let them handle it.

In some states and/or communities there have been experiments in recent years in partnering police and mental health workers, police and child pro-

tection workers, and other partnerships that have proven to be quite successful. Training more community members to deal with some of these situations in their own community and giving them adequate resources might also be successful. Other ideas are more radical and much more problematic, such as “neighborhoods will demand money from the city, and we’ll provide our own protection.”

It will take time to come up with the best solution, but it is essential that we make the effort. Mayor Lori Lightfoot of Chicago

recently spoke of a Police Reform and Racial Justice Working Group that is building authentic relationships between law enforcement and residents in the Chicago area. The U.S. Conference of Mayors is studying police violence and patterns of discrimination and hopes



<https://www.sagaciousnewsnetwork.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/ep-221x228.jpg>

to release actionable recommendation by July. There are recommendations to totally abolish police departments and have community groups “start from scratch” to determine what is needed in their community. Other ideas include a move from “warrior” and fear-based training that many departments now use and move toward more training in bias reduction and compassionate interaction. Infractions by the police must be investigated and not ignored or covered up. The role of powerful unions protecting officers who cross the line needs to be limited. There is much that needs to be considered in making significant reforms, but without it, we will continue to see horrific events happening again and again.

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*\*computer generated/volunteer labor\**

## Fund Community Services

By Michaela Raymond

The catch phrase of the recent protests is “Defund the Police.” Catchy as it is, it is subject to various interpretations. Some promote idealistic absurdities such as doing



[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/f/f1/Defund\\_the\\_police.jpg/1200px-Defund\\_the\\_police.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/f/f1/Defund_the_police.jpg/1200px-Defund_the_police.jpg)

away with police in general. To others it means scrapping the current police force and starting over as a way of purging corruption.

During the process the jurisdiction may contract with a neighboring agency for police protection. That seemed to work in Camden, New Jersey. What many people mean is a way to make community services work most smoothly for its citizens by spreading the support for the various agencies to work together by having the wherewithal for each to do what it does best.

Funding all services adequately is essential. We need the courage to decriminalize some things in order to provide proper treatment therefore reducing recidivism. Drug addicts don't recover because they go to jail; neither do people with mental problems. Jails get filled with social problems. Detention personnel can't and shouldn't be the solution to what must be done by medical staff.

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<http://note.noughgood.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/635893456958848927->

Detention personnel can't and shouldn't be the solution to what must be done by medical staff.



<https://contenteditors.files.wordpress.com/2013/01/police-to-serve-and-protect-stone-auto-car-coaster-1-as-seen-on->

Police need to be better trained in many areas. The screening process and supervision have to be improved, made more professional. Again, I say MOST police are doing a good/great job, but frankly there are gun happy nuts and racists *etc.* who make it through the screening process. We have

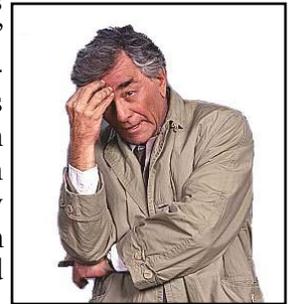
to demand that the police become more a part of the society they police. Nothing defuses a situation more quickly than an officer coming into a situation and being able to use the name of a couple of the individuals involved, which can reduce the need of escalated force.

Police are generally going to have to respond to

the public's calls/concerns in order to screen a proper approach but then quickly should be able to apply the most appropriate service by the appropriate agency if different from law enforcement. Well trained colleagues can provide a smooth integration of services.

Officers can burn out over time and should have sabbaticals as part of the job so they can refresh. It will cost money to make most proposed changes, and some people will fight that prospect tooth and nail. The public needs to think of it as an investment in good community welfare, not an expense.

So far this has just been an old retired cop rambling on, but like Columbo always said, “Just one more thing...” Police must remember that resistance alone is not grounds for “use of deadly force.” An old combat instructor I had in the law enforcement academy said, “We are going to teach you that when you get knocked on the seat of your pretty maroon pants, it is not the end of the world.”



<https://static.miraheze.org/allthetropes/wiki/9/9b/MWTM/Columbo5.jpg>

Along with that change of mindset, some “rules of engagement” need to be eliminated. Departments must ban pretext stops and unreasonable detention. Many of the incidents that we've seen escalate into deaths over relatively minor infractions began as profiling.

Some police are more effective in doing their job than other officers, just like any other professions where skill levels vary between colleagues. Police techniques and strategy have developed and evolved over time, and many factors are included in developing police procedures including Supreme Court rulings, legislation, academy training, and the individual's life experience and skills.

There are officers who want to lead the pack, develop a reputation, or because of prejudice or bias use a pretext to detain people in order to “find a crime.” Officers who use pretext to stop potential criminals are often able to develop something or at least write the “SOB” a ticket. The quality of police officers' work must be scrutinized closely by supervisors. Quantity of arrests should not be a major factor in evaluating officers. You can bet that departments that have bad cops have bad supervision. The use of pretext to detain the public must be halted. Law enforcement officers need to keep in mind that their duty is to protect and serve the public—all of the public. That was true during my ancient law enforcement career, and it is still true now.

# Ode to My Mom

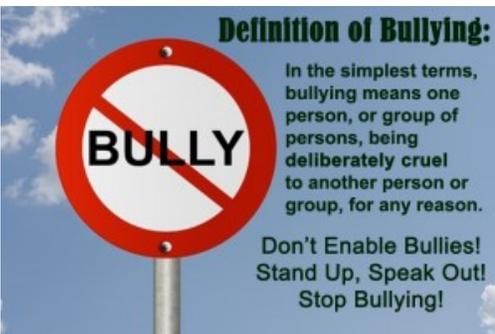
By Deanna Ensley

My mom passed away just over three years ago. I had been estranged from my parents for ten years when she passed away. That meant there was little communication between my parents and me. I am writing this as an ode to my mother for the inspiration she provided me for a very important asset, especially in today's world. She raised my brother and me in a very insightful way regarding race and people of color.

Brought up by a single mother, my mother grew up in Detroit. The diversity she experienced must have caused her to be understanding and tolerant of people of different races and religions. My mom never expressed racial bias in all the 50 some years that I knew her well. In fact, beyond never expressing racial bias, she did not allow racist talk or actions in our home. My father was from Washington State and raised around Native Americans. As a matter of fact, he left home as a teenager and paid to move in with a neighboring Native family instead of living with his own family. Eventually, we were indirectly related to that family by marriage.

I was brought up in a small Washington town of 150. The minorities there were Natives and migrant Mexicans. I remember being fascinated with the Mexicans speaking Spanish and wondering what they were saying. I had no other idea or impression of these people when I was a child other than they came to work and they spoke a different language. There was a time I heard people speak crudely of these people. My mother explained what was meant, but we never spoke or were allowed to speak those hurtful words.

As I got older, we often visited relatives in Seattle where I was allowed a lot of freedom. In the 1960s, Seattle was not the racially diverse city it is today, but it was a large city, especially compared to the very small town we lived in. The experience of freedom in Seattle expanded my



understanding and tolerance of the world plus built confidence for the future of how to deal with people. With relatively few experiences with people of color, I developed a very strong objec-

tion to bullying. Racist and biased behavior became bullying to me. I became intolerant of all bullying, whether it was between two white teenage boys struggling to see who was more powerful or later in life what authority was going to exert its influence over subordinates.

I eventually was a state park ranger for 16 years. In Washington park rangers have the same authority as state troopers, which means I had many hours of law enforcement training from 1981 to 1998. I learned important things about human behavior that have helped me throughout my life. So I have an unusual perspective on police and some of the events leading up to the protests we're witnessing. Because of my upbringing, I do not have racial bias, but I do understand my white privilege and have little tolerance for most police. As a park ranger, I had many encounters with various law enforcement personnel in many areas of Washington and in a variety of circumstances. I differentiate police from all other law enforcement. I have seen most state troopers and law enforcement detectives as a more tolerant and better educated sector of law enforcement.



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My experiences as a park ranger gave me a wide view with many people and their many cultures. These experiences only helped me understand different people and expand my tolerance for all people—except law enforcement (even many park rangers). I personally have little use for law enforcement. I am



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not saying that I have no tolerance for the people of law enforcement but in general for the culture. I see police, municipal law enforcement officers, as mostly poorly trained or sadly unaware, power seeking, egomaniacs. I avoid them in all respects. Mainly for me, I do not speed; I have never had a ticket. This has been my all-out effort to avoid contact with law enforcement.

Locally, I have only negative experience with law enforcement and have heard little positive, except that most people seem to approve of Chief Scott Johnson. I have had two personal experiences; the rest of what I "know" is hearsay. My incidences are not of any great significance except they reinforce my belief that police reform is needed in most jurisdictions.

Beyond my personal experience, I am greatly con-

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cerned about the many people who have to live in fear of law enforcement. What does that say? Is that the best way to try to keep people under control, to keep them afraid? I think not. No wonder we are finally once again seeing severe rejection of law enforcement as it exists for racial injustice. Locally, I am involved with several groups concerned with social justice. Here in this white privileged community, we have to learn about how to expand the acceptance of all people; we have to make this a livable environment for all peoples. There is no place for hate. I include myself in that expectation. I moved to Grand Rapids almost five years ago and soon was fearful of the narrow-minded community I found compared to the false assumption I had had of Minnesota. I had assumed Minnesota was an accepting place of liberal thinkers like Paul Wellstone and Al Franken, but that was not exactly what I found.



<http://manipureonline.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/Unite-Against-Racism1.jpg>

I will be forever grateful for the antiracist upbringing my mother provided. Prejudice means prejudging on qualities other than people's actions. We need to look to people as individuals with their actions, not as a member of a race, group, or culture. Please consider expanding your knowledge of white privilege, social justice, and antiracism. If you are reading this, you are one of the people who can be an influencer and can help bring change to this society.

## Dissing Unity

By Valerie Conner

Throughout his campaign and reign Trump has appealed to our worst angels. He did not invent hate; it has always existed in our culture, but he has given it permission to raise its proud, ugly head. George W. Bush proclaimed that he was "a uniter, not a divider." Trump is the opposite. In fact that and creating chaos are the bedrock of his administration.

For decades after every mass shooting and every publicized death in police custody, we've said, "This time feels different. This time we'll do something about it." Then, nothing. The killing of George Floyd generated a reaction that may actually stay in our consciousness long enough to effect

change. Maybe people are just bored and want to get outside, but I don't think so. This time things truly do feel different.

The protests have followed the normal course: peaceful demonstrations infiltrated by rabble-rousers and extremists bent on causing destruction for its own sake and looters out to get that big TV they've always wanted followed by police reactions to restore order, often with violence of their own. The

fact that the Minneapolis demonstrations have spread throughout the nation and the world shows that a cord has been struck. A



month after Floyd's death people are still in the streets.

Earlier this month Indivisible sponsored a demonstration in Grand Rapids where 150 people showed up, masked and maintaining social distance, to express their support for unity, fairness, and against hatred. The vast majority (percentage in the 90s)



of the passing traffic honked and gave thumbs up; only a few

gunned their engines and gave different hand signals. That was heartening.

Also, the cause has widened from blacks being abused by police and the system in general to an insurrection against the romanticized antebellum South. Heroes of the Confederacy are now seen for the traitors they were. Razing statues and the banning of the Confederate flag by NASCAR and others are big, permanent steps. The attacks on any and all statues are an issue for another time.

Ironically, Trump's strategy of divide and conquer is backfiring. People are sick of hatred and mistreatment of fellow citizens.

The Great Divider may unite us after all.